

WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL held Saturday, February 19, 2011, for the purpose of meeting to discuss Visioning Goals and Objectives.

Mayor Davis started the meeting at 10:07am. It was held in the Council Room of the Municipal Building.

PRESENT WERE: Councilmembers Konrad E. Herling, Emmett V. Jordan, Leta M. Mach, Silke I. Pope, Edward V.J. Putens, Rodney M. Roberts and Mayor Judith F. Davis.

STAFF PRESENT WERE: Michael P. McLaughlin, City Manager and David E. Moran, Assistant City Manager.

ALSO PRESENT WAS: Bill Orleans.

Mayor Davis began by presenting a brief history of past visioning processes in the City. She listed the goals from a previous visioning process. Mayor Davis noted that this current list had come out of the community visioning process in 2008.

Mr. McLaughlin stated that some sort of goal setting occurs about every 4-7 years. He indicated that the goals serve as a roadmap for budget planning.

Mr. Jordan appreciated the opportunity to discuss goals. He suggested the need for more community input.

Mr. McLaughlin provided a quick review of the Visioning Goals Update. Mayor Davis noted that there were no action steps under “become more involved in the business community”. Ms. Mach stated that good progress had been made, but some goals were ongoing. She cited publicizing the new banner program and continuing evaluation of crosswalks as examples of ongoing action steps.

Mr. Jordan suggested that Council may need to provide more guidance and get more feedback from advisory groups related to goals. Mr. Herling stated this was a balancing act. Mayor Davis asked Mr. McLaughlin about updates from advisory groups. Mr. McLaughlin suggested that Council request updates and place this on an upcoming Council agenda. Mr. Putens expressed concern about workload for staff and the advisory groups. Mr. Roberts believed the information was out there and Council could obtain it if necessary.

Council asked that advisory groups review their “charters/governing documents” and provide Council with any updates if needed.

Mayor Davis suggested that a Visioning Update be presented at a Regular Meeting. Mr. Herling expressed a desire to ensure that information gets to apartment residents. Mayor Davis noted the methods that are used to provide information about goals including News Review, Newsletter and website.

Council discussed each of the Goals.

Enhance Sense of Community

Mr. Jordan asked about the City's banner program and if the change had reduced the number of banners. Mr. McLaughlin indicated he would check into this.

Ms. Mach and Mayor Davis expressed the need for more intra-City signage. Ms. Mach encouraged the use of email lists and list-serves to communicate with residents. There was discussion about emails, privacy issues and what the City should be doing. Mr. Jordan suggested the City needed to utilize a "multi-channel" approach to getting information out about the City.

There was discussion about sense of identity. Mayor Davis discussed marketing Greenbelt's positives. Ms. Mach stressed the value of information kiosks. Mr. Jordan believed cultural competency needed to be stressed.

Improve Transportation Opportunities

Council discussed transportation. Mr. Putens mentioned the Cherrywood Lane bridge and some concerns related to bike riding and vandalism. Mr. Jordan suggested additional landscaping near the Spellman Overpass. Council discussed concerns about the Greenbelt Road bridge over the BW Parkway, especially the narrow sidewalks and pedestrian connections.

Make Greenbelt a 21st Century Community

Mayor Davis stressed the desire to have electric vehicle charging stations in the community as a management objective. Ms. Mach asked about reducing miles driven by City vehicles. Mr. McLaughlin responded that staff was monitoring this. Mr. Putens suggested use of smaller electric carts or vehicles for certain staff functions. Mr. Jordan asked if it made sense to outsource the City's vehicle fleet. Mr. Roberts asked what types of maintenance work was contracted out. Mr. McLaughlin agreed to provide a report to Council on contract services.

Mr. Jordan suggested providing businesses with good examples of green practices/designs and share these with City businesses like Greenway Center. He cited Capital Office Park as a good example.

Improve & Enhance Public Safety

Council asked about speed cameras. Mr. McLaughlin stated that the City was working with Howard County and hoped to present a proposal to Council later this year.

There was considerable discussion about emergency preparedness and how to notify residents about emergencies.

Mayor Davis suggested that development of a City Master plan needed to be on the workload list.

Preserve and Enhance Greenbelt

Mr. Roberts suggested that the City needed to look at litigation to obtain planning and zoning authority. There was considerable discussion about pursuing this litigation, the timing and the costs.

Recreation

Mr. Jordan noted that the City needed to make difficult budget decisions. He suggested the City work with homeowner associations to utilize their meeting rooms & space for programming. Mayor Davis suggested that more Spanish classes need to be offered. Mr. Putens suggested that additional outdoor recreation opportunities needed to be offered at Greenbelt Lake.

There was discussion about the Garden Club, the three sisters group and challenges that have arisen to date.

Fiscal Sustainability

Mr. Jordan suggested that the City needed to have its own demographic data about the type of companies that are located in the City. He believed this information was necessary so Greenbelt could tell its own story. Mr. Herling stated that the City needed to recruit businesses to fill vacant space. He suggested the creation of a community development corporation.

Mr. Jordan suggested that the City needed an outside consultant to evaluate City business practices in a more efficient way. Mr. Roberts stated that Greenbelt had a strong economic base. He expressed concern about the loss of small (mom & pop) businesses.

Provide Quality of Life Program for Seniors

There was discussion about the need for senior access to computers.

Invest in Greenbelt Youth

Council discussed internship opportunities for youth. Mr. McLaughlin noted that the GAIL & CARES programs make extensive use of interns.

Social Services

There was discussion about the CARES rebranding. The role of the Community Relations Advisory Board was also discussed. Homelessness and the City's response to it was talked about as well.

Other

Council expressed a desire to hold town hall meetings in March, 2011. Use of banners to promote these town hall meeting was suggested. Mr. Jordan referenced the need to revisit the

visioning process. Council discussed holding visioning session in conjunction with the 75th Anniversary Committee.

The meeting ended at 3:00pm.

Respectfully submitted,

*David E. Moran
Assistant City Manager*